Withdrawal of reservation for SCs and STs in the Army

9. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether Government have a proposal to withdraw reservation of posts for appointment in different grades in Army; and

(b)if so, the reasons lor taking such a decision to dereserve the posts earmarked for SCs, STs & other categories in Army?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Recruitment in the Army is open to all sections of the society irrespective of caste, creed or religion provided they meet the laid down physical, medical and educational standards.

In order to maintain highest standards of operational efficiency, appointments and selection to the Defence Services have been made strictly on merit and no reservation on the basis of the caste, community, area or class is provided.

Ajit Kumar Committee Report

10. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether the Ajit Kumar Committee looking into (i) Fifth Pay Commission related anomalies, (ii) grievances of armed forces personnel with special emphasis on risk related allpwaces, and (iii) regrouping of personnel below officer rank has since submitted its Report to Union Defence Minister;

(b)if so, when and what are the details of its main recommendations; and

(c)the time likely to be taken by Government to examine/implement the Report and whether any budgetary provisions have been made during 1998-99?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) The Ajit Kumar Committee- to consider anomalies in pay and allowances of the armed forces personnel arising out of the V Cental Pay Commission recommendations, has submitted its Report. It will not be in public interest to disclose the recommendations of the Committee at this stage, as these are-presently under consideration of the Government.

(c) Action has been initiated for early implementation.

Test firing of Ghauri Missile by Pakistan

11. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:
SHRI S.M. KRISHNA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether Pakistan test fired Ghauri missile with a range of 1500 km. which is capable of carrying a load of 700 kg. on 6th April, 1998;

(b)whether the missile has been made with the technology transfer of M-ll group of missiles of China;

(c)whether Government have taken adequate measures to counter the threat posed to country's security by such development; and

(d)if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Government is aware of reports regarding test-firing of "Ghauri" missile by Pakistan. Reports also suggest the possibility of the missile/missile technology having been obtained from a third country. The Chinese assistance to Pakistan in the supply of M-ll missile or technical assistance in the development of indigenous missile, is wellknown.

(c) and (d) All developments having bearing on the national security of India are continuously monitored and all necessary steps are taken from time to time to maintain appropriate defence preparedness to thwart any attempt of misadventure on the part of our adversaries.

Committee to probe anomalies in the recommendation of the Fifth Pay Commission for the armed forces

12. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether a high level committee headed by Defence Secretary has finalised its report on anomalies in the Fifth Pay Commission for the armed forces;

(b)if so, whether Government have examined the report submitted by Defence Secretary;

(c)if so, whether there is still any resentment amongst armed forces on the Fifth Pay Commission recommendations; and

(d)if so, by when all the genuine demands of armed forces would be met?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) The High Level Committee set up under the Chairmanship of Defence Secretary with three Service Vice Chiefs and Financial Adviser (Defence Services) as the members to consider anomalies in pay and allowances of the armed forces personnel arising out of the V Central Pay Commission recommendations, has submitted its Report. The Committee while finalising its report has given due consideration to the grievances of the service personnel on the V Pay Commission recommendations. It will not be in public interest to disclose the recommendations of the Committee at this stage. Appropriate decisions will be taken as soon as possible.

Installation of Electronic Surveillance system at Coco Islands by China

13. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether it is a fact that China installed a massive electronic surveillance establishment at Burma's Coco Islands near Andaman;

(b)if so, since how long this surveillance system has been continuing;

(c)whether Government have taken up this issue with the Chinese Army Chief during his recent visit; and

(d)if so, his reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Intelligence reports available with the Government indicate installation by China of electronic surveillance devices in •Coco Islands.

(b)Chinese activities on this Island have been notice since mid-1994.

(c)and (d) The Chief of General Staff, PLA, made a goodwill visit to India recently. During discussions with him, matters of mutual interest and concern were discussed. It will not be appropriate to disclose details of the discussions in the interest of national security and relations with neighbours.

Purchase of Submarines spares through Russian firm

14. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMA-CHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether any complaints have been received against purchase - of spares for submarines through Russian firm;

(b)if so, the details thereof; and

(c)the action taken to inquire into the graft charges?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Naval Head-quarters have reported that an incidence of minor deviation in